New paradigms of psychiatry

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Outline of presentation

• The context of psychiatry and mental health care
• The current paradigms of psychiatry
• Steps to the development of new paradigms

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The context of psychiatry and mental health care in the early 21st century

- Globalization
- Urbanization
- Demographic changes
- Changes of middle class
- Changes of family structure and functioning
- Changes of ethos of societies and medicine
- Growth of "ills of our times"

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Globalization and mental health

- Imposition of value systems,
- Weakening of community defence mechanisms
- Increasing awareness of gaps and unreachable opportunities
- Migration of people, of talents and of capital
- Decrease of social capital of societies

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Urbanization

• Urbanization is progressing at a faster rate than expected and communal services are lagging behind.
• Urbanization changes the definition of communities
• A significant proportion of urban dwellers live alone
• Challenges arising from urbanization have no coherent and effective policy (or technological) answer

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Demographic changes

• Drop of natality, particularly in the privileged classes
• Diminishing size and stability of families
• Increasing life expectancy with a stability of the number of years free of illness and impairment
• Differences in demographic structures of immigrant and host societies.

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Changes of the middle class

• The middle class in the developed countries is shrinking with a consequent weakening of enforcement of moral norms

• In the developing countries the middle class is growing, with a tendency of separation from the rest of the population.

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Changes of family structures and functioning

• Increasing tendency of employment of women outside of the house creates a crisis in the traditional areas of women's contribution
  – Care for the sick and elderly
  – Transmission of culture (and of its features protecting communities and their members)
  – Upbringing of children
  – Creating and maintaining social networks

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Changes of the ethos of societies and of medicine

- Spread of commodification
- Duty to live or right to die?
- Increasing role of apparatus and machines widening gaps between people in health services and in society.
- Burn-out of staff, of those chronically ill and of those helping them
- Erosion of currently held paradigms of medicine

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Paradigms of medicine and psychiatry that may no longer be valid

- Mental disorders usually occur on their own, not co-morbidly with physical illness
- The treatment of mental disorders can be delegated to primary health care personnel
- Community care is a realistic and most desirable option for effective mental health care
- Stigma of mental illness can be removed by proper education

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Paradigms of medicine and psychiatry that may no longer be valid

- People with mental illness should have access to care equal to others
- Removing symptoms is the ultimate goal of health care
- Goals of treatment should be defined by society’s needs or medical reasoning

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Components of a possible answer to challenges to global mental health

• Reduce policies and plans for countries -or groups of countries (e.g. the European Union) to a few universal principles

• Make structural adjustments that will allow the development and implementation of plans locally, at the level of the smallest coherent unit

• Develop plans in collaboration with those most concerned with the issues

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Components of a possible answer to challenges to global mental health

• Introduce programmes against stigma of mental illness as a routine part of services
• Review strategies of community care and of the delegation of care to primary health care workers
  – Define the communities of 2010
  – Provide concrete and moral support to families
  – Review ways in which to effect task shifting (what to whom and how to delegate)

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Components of a possible answer to challenges to global mental health

• Involve components of the private health sector in mental health programmes

• Make mental health workers
  – aware of their behaviour, presentation and relationships with the rest of medicine and the media
  – Remain abreast of advances of science, medicine and legislation.

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Coda

• Global mental health has to face a variety of new challenges emerging from changes of societies and of medicine
• Elements of an answer to these challenge are known. Their use is feasible and they would be effective.
• We could advance global mental health despite all challenges if we decide to do so.

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